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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 007677

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SENSITIVE

FROM USMISSION UNESCO PARIS

E.O. 12958:   N/A
TAGS: KPAO ECPS ETRD ECON EINT ETTC UNESCO
SUBJECT: USUNESCO: UNESCO'S WSIS PREPARATION

REF: Paris 7472
¶1.   (SBU) SUMMARY: During a November 7
presentation to member states on UNESCO
preparations for WSIS, Assistant Director General
Abdul Waheed Khan discussed Internet governance,
the possibility of UNESCO and ITU leading roles in
post-WSIS implementation, the UNESCO "brand" at
WSIS, planned UNESCO activities at WSIS (This
includes a roundtable entitled "Shaping the Future
Through Knowledge", and starring Viviane Reding,
the EU Information Society Commissioner.) and the
potential for new UNESCO instruments coming out of
WSIS. END SUMMARY.

INTERNET GOVERNANCE

¶2. (SBU) Khan described UNESCO's position on
Internet governance as ensuring ethical and
political openness - the free flow of ideas and
freedom of expression. He stated that UNESCO
wanted to see technical openness guaranteed
because the current open architecture contributes
to greater access worldwide. He stated that
interoperability and openness were critical
features of any Internet governance mechanism.
(COMMENT: The use of the word "any" here suggests
Khan does not want to be pinned down as supporting
either the USG or EU position on Internet
governance. END COMMENT.) He also stated that it
should harness continuing innovation on the
Internet, safeguard stability, avoid fragmentation
and protect against government censorship because
this would move against UNESCO's advocacy of the
free flow of words and ideas.
¶3.   (SBU) A German delegate to UNESCO asked Khan
how UNESCO should deal with the misuse of ICTs
under the current Internet governance system.
Khan responded that security is one issue related
to the misuse of ICTs, and he acknowledged that
UNESCO does not have competence in this area. He
added that when it comes to pedophilia and
pornography, the examples of misuse that are most
frequently cited, UNESCO believes in the free flow
of information. If there is abuse, he stated,
every land has its own laws that apply. We cannot
have a blanket law for this, he added.

UNESCO and ITU to Share WSIS Implementation?

¶4.   (SBU) As noted in reftel, UNESCO passed a
General Conference resolution stressing the
leading roles of UNESCO and the ITU in WSIS
implementation. Khan stated that throughout the
WSIS process, UNESCO has contributed to the WSIS
plan of action, therefore it should have a
significant role, but along with others. He added
that UNESCO couldn't implement WSIS on its own.
Follow up, he said, was distinct from
implementation, and should involve all members of
the UN family. He noted that ECOSOC, not UNESCO,
had a political role.
¶5.   (SBU) The ITU, Khan stated, is an important
agency engaged in developing ICT infrastructure
with a major role in creating access to the
Internet. Once you have access, Khan continued,
UNESCO would come in on substance. He explained
that this meant UNESCO would ask if content was
produced locally and was in a local language so
that ICTs can be used for development. UNESCO's
value-added at WSIS, he stated, is its
demonstrated role in building a knowledge society
- as opposed to an information society, which is
limited to infrastructure. Khan stated that a
knowledge society builds political empowerment and
cultural engagement. It is more, he said, than
creating an infrastructure and hoping people will
use it. (COMMENT: We note that there is a
perception at UNESCO that the ITU wanted WSIS to
be its show and that UNESCO has had to fight for
engagement. This may be why UNESCO has pushed the
"knowledge society" concept over "information"
since its value-added is its historic expertise in

education, science, culture and, more recently, media freedom.)   When pressed by the Japanese delegation, Khan acknowledged that there was no agreement between UNESCO and the ITU for WSIS follow up.

¶6. (SBU) When pressed by the Indian delegation to take more member states views into account on copyright/intellectual property issues, for example, Khan stated that member state views were important, but his job was to develop the UNESCO brand at WSIS. Too many points would make it hard for people to distinguish UNESCO's value-added in the WSIS process. He stated that the Director General's intervention at WSIS would focus on the essence of UNESCO's value-added: knowledge society, universal access, cultural and linguistic diversity, freedom of expression and education for all via ICTs. Other views would be addressed through UNESCO activities at WSIS, he added.

UNESCO Activities at WSIS:

¶7. (SBU) At WSIS, UNESCO will host two round tables - a high level round table "Shaping the Future through Knowledge" with Viviane Reding, the EU's Commissioner for the Information Society, President Rayna of the Dominican Republic, and the Egyptian Minister of State for Administrative Development, among others. (COMMENT: It is not a balanced group of viewpoints.) UNESCO will host a second roundtable: "The Role of UNESCO in the Construction of Knowledge Societies through the UNITWIN and UNESCO Program." (UNITWIN was established at the 1992 UNESCO General Conference and is the abbreviation for the University Twinning and networking scheme at UNESCO.) UNESCO will also host a workshop on ICTs and people with disabilities (to include discussion of special library services and free or open software solutions, as well as ICTs for autism). UNESCO has constructed a chic pavilion with a VIP lounge at stand 2303 at Tunis where it will host an "ICT for All" exhibit and establish partnerships with the private sector and NGOs visiting the stand.

WSIS and Normative Instruments:

¶8. (SBU) The Japanese delegation asked Khan to provide more specifics on UNESCO's role with WSIS action line 10 "Ethical dimensions" -- would this lead to any normative instruments, such as one for ICTs and people with disabilities?   Khan responded that this was one area where UNESCO could develop an instrument. UNESCO had not taken a decision on this, but he would have a follow up meeting. The current budget is not based on this. To determine how UNESCO, as a standard setter, can contribute, would need further debate, Khan stated.

¶9. (SBU) Mission followed up with the Japanese delegation to ask whether they were hoping to have such an instrument or whether they had heard interest from other delegations. The Japanese reported that they had not, though it was possible that someone would want to do this in the future. Mission Charge raised the question again with several Western DCMs who shuddered at the thought of further instruments, and agreed that if UNESCO wanted to be pro-active in helping people with disabilities access ICTs, it could do so without a new instrument.

¶11. (SBU) COMMENT: Khan is clearly playing it safe with vague wording that pleases both the EU and the US on Internet governance, a battle he appears happy to stay as far away from as possible. To placate the many viewpoints on WSIS at UNESCO and forge its identity at WSIS, he has chosen to brand UNESCO as an organization whose experience in education, culture, science, and media freedom primes it to build knowledge societies. At the same time, Mission notes that UNESCO is sponsoring forums at WSIS where viewpoints on Internet governance and WSIS implementation will not be balanced. Japan's interest in the division of labor between the ITU and UNESCO is interesting, since both UN organizations are headed by Japanese Director Generals, who are rumored to not get along.
KOSS